

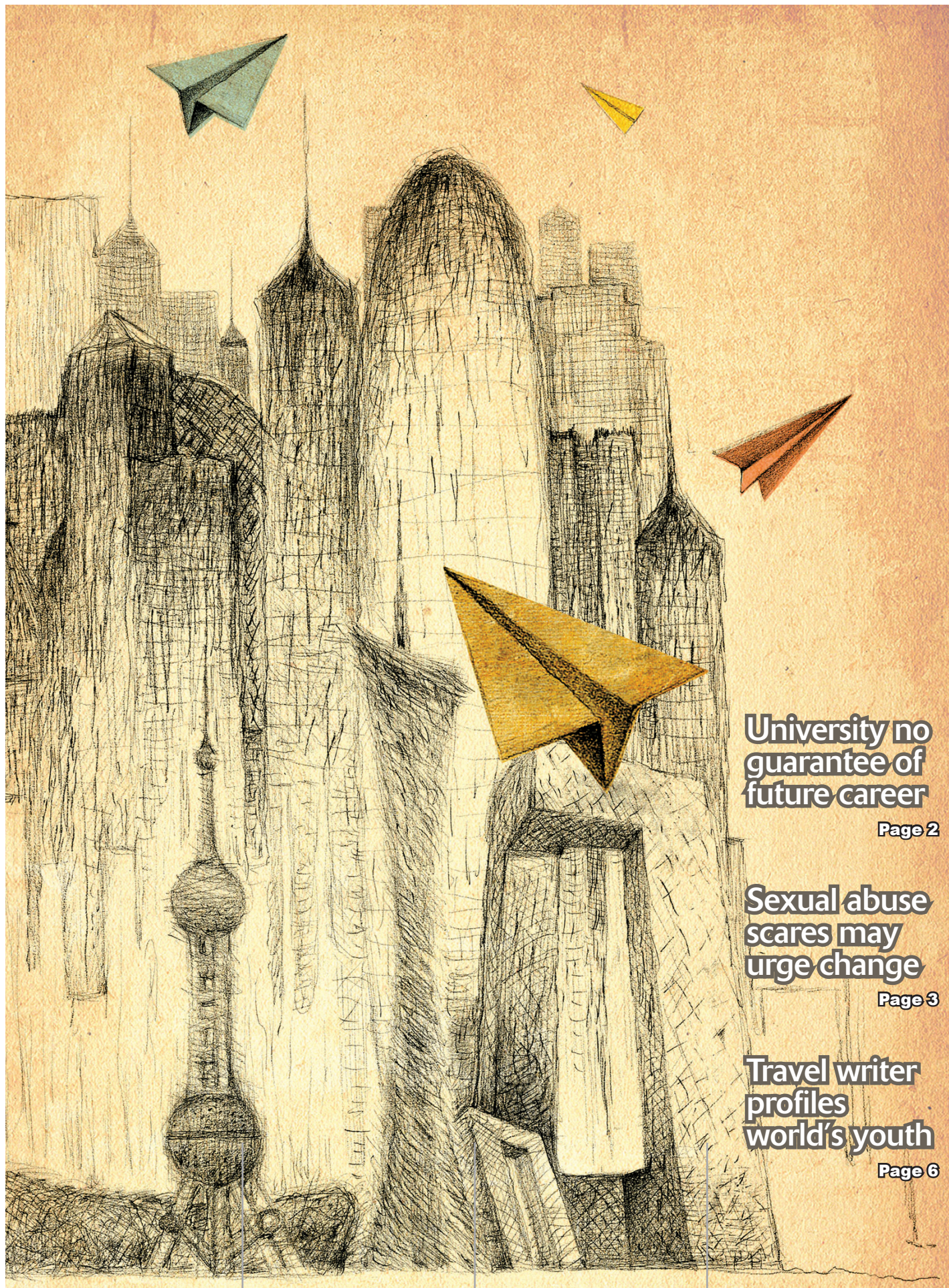


Youth renaissance

The movies *So Young* and *American Dreams in China* have brought a new focus to the power of youth and the hopelessness they face today compared to in the past.

China is on the verge of a major shift, and the choices it makes will determine whether dynamic youth will lead the country forward or the last generation will drag it back into stagnation.

Read more on Pages 4-5



**University no
guarantee of
future career**

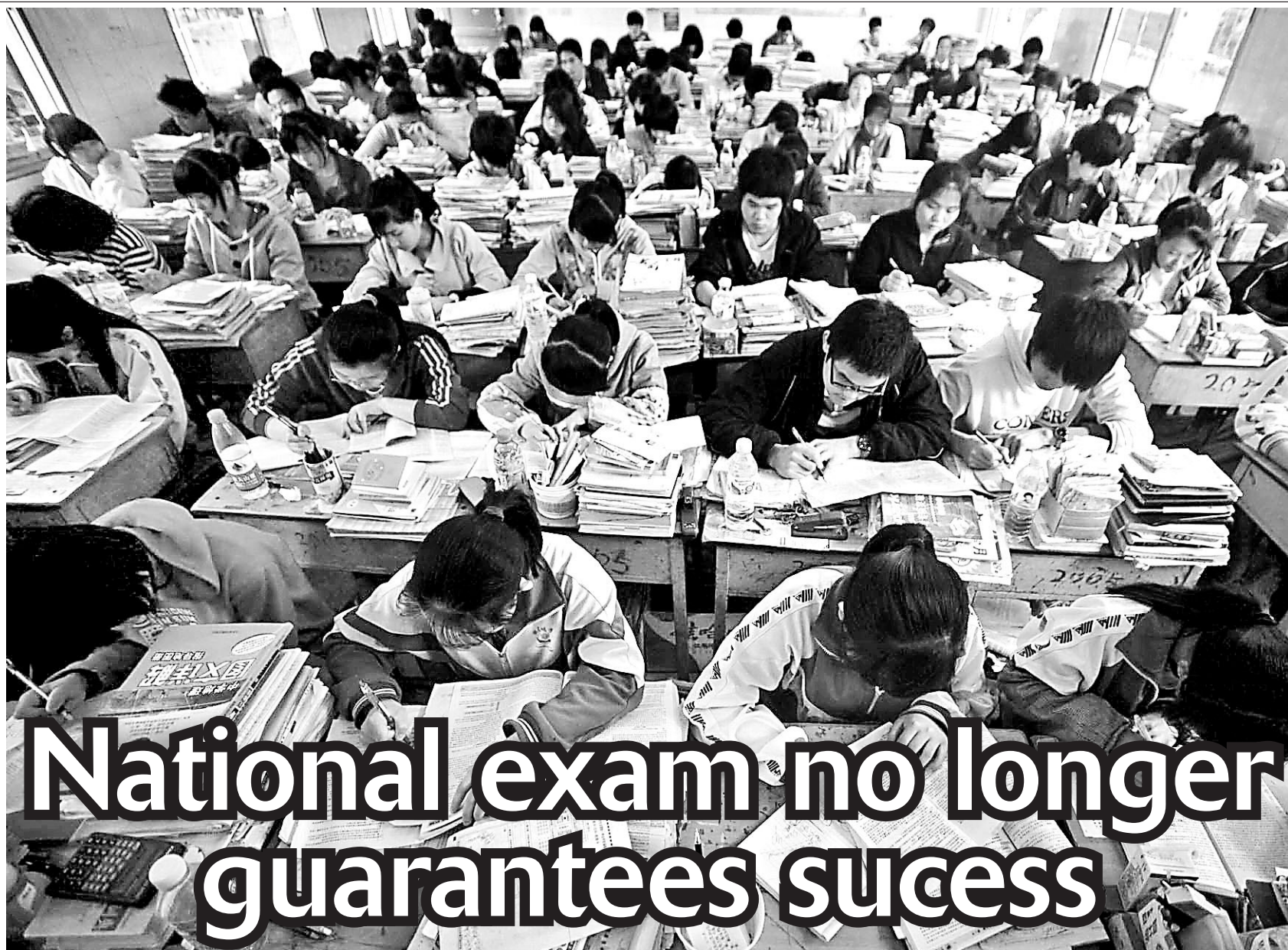
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scares may
urge change**

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profiles
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National exam no longer guarantees success

The National University Entrance Exam is a bridge every student must cross.

CFP Photo

Hard preparation

Xu Qing lost her father at the age of 7. When her mother remarried, Xu was sent to live with her grandmother, a trash collector.

That early exposure to hard labor taught Xu the value of focusing on her studies, and throughout her school years she won many awards.

Her dream is to study medicine at Peking University, a goal her teachers and classmates say is well within her reach.

Twin sisters Zhang Lu and Zhang Lin hoped to become film stars through the Beijing Film Academy, but had to downgrade their dreams after failing the school's entrance tests.

They have since applied for the industrial design program at Beijing University of Technology.

"We know that university is really just the start of life," Zhang Lu says.

Another student, Fu Li, comes from a busy family. Her father is a chemical engineer and her mother a teacher.

With no one home, Fu learned self reliance at an early age. She has applied to the school of medicine at Tsinghua University, where she hopes to combine her interests in medicine and chemistry.

By Zhao Hongyi

For decades, China's National University Entrance Exam has been the gate through which all students must pass if they want the chance to have a successful career. More than 9 million teens signed up to take the test last weekend.

But higher education may not be the advantage it once was.

Almost 7 million students will graduate from a university and enter the job market this year – more than ever before. And that glut of entry-level workers is straining the job market.

Valuable help

Teachers are even busier than their students in the final days before the National University Entrance Exam.

Because society puts so much emphasis on the rate of college admissions, teachers and students spend long hours after school cramming information and practicing sample test sections.

Du Qingtian, a teacher of Class 11 at Changping No. 1 High School, has been having to take his three-year-old daughter to school every day while he stays late to drill students in math and practice tests.

Du spends most of his free time in the classroom, making himself available to the students. "We love all our students and want to see each of them make it into a university," Du says.

Du says university educa-

tion is the basic requirement for students who want to be able to compete in the labor market.

For the three days of the exam, parents dote on their children, preparing their meals, papers, pencils and pens. Many taxis throughout the city transport students to their examination sites, and streets and lanes near the testing center close to traffic to avoid disturbing the test takers.

Way out

Since a rapid expansion of the university system in the 1990s, China has more than 1,700, making it fourth in the world after the US, UK and France.

Many vocational schools and junior colleges upgraded their status to universities to meet the higher education demands of the policy.

As a result, university enrollment has exploded from 1.8 million graduates in 2000 to

more than 6.5 million in 2012.

The surge in graduates has marginalized many vocational schools and colleges, as parents prefer to send their children for formal education rather than skill training.

The result has been a workforce schooled in theory, yet woefully incapable of meeting the needs of entry-level work.

The reforms have turned Chinese education into an incubator for US-bound scientists, according to a survey by the Chinese Academy of Social Science.

As many as 90 percent of the graduates from Peking University and Tsinghua University go on to study in the US, and 90 percent choose to settle there.

This year, as many as 6.99 million students will graduate from universities and enter the labor market.

But scientists make poor

skilled factory workers. China's factories are now desperate for workers, and many in the Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta are offering salaries of 5,000 to 8,000 yuan per month for qualified candidates.

Without the skills needed by the job market, China's graduates are being forced into poor communities in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, or back to their hometowns where employment prospects are bleak.

"Chinese people insist that staying in a big city is the way to have a better future," says Wang Jun, a professor of social science at Peking University.

Salaries for university graduates have tumbled from 5,000 yuan to less than 3,000 yuan this year. But even that low, most remain unable to find work.

But incoming students remain optimistic.

"I'm sure that we can find a job in the future," say the students at Changping No. 1 High School. "Unemployment is just a period you have to go through."

Most believe the solution is postgraduate study, or further study in the US or Australia.

"The future is bright," Fu Li says.

Sexual abuse cases lead to calls for reform

By Bao Chengrong

Eight recent cases of sexually abused children cast a shadow over International Children's Day on June 1. More shocking was most of the assailants were teachers and principals.

Public calls were made for stricter qualification requirements for primary school teachers, harsher penalties for criminals and more sex education for minors.

In some cases, the victims had been abused for years. In Anhui Province, one principal abused nine girls for 12 years.

Xiong Bingqi, a professor at Shanghai Jiaotong University, said school systems encourage students to tell their parents about good news, but not bad.

"If they could learn to protect themselves and report cases to the police earlier, their suffering wouldn't last as long," Xiong said.

A lack of sex education has been a chronic problem for Chinese minors. A recent national survey showed that 93 percent parents support adding courses about how to deal with sexual assault.

The survey also showed that 38 percent of children have never learned how to protect their bodies and nearly 42 percent of parents have never taught their children about the physical differences between genders.

Xiong said the lack of sex-ed is because traditional ideals forbid open discussion of sex, and the current emphasis on entrance exams means schools don't have time to focus on civic education.

Eighteen elementary schools in Shanghai are trying to fill the gap. They recently opened a self-protection course. In a second-grade class, the teacher showed students six pictures of adults who might hurt them, including a teacher, a relative, a neighbor, a policeman, a stranger and a postman.

Ding Limin, founder of the course, said children often don't take any precautions against the people they trust.

Among the 40 reported sexual abuse cases of children in the last eight years, 83 percent of the victims knew their assailant. In five such cases, the abuse went on for at least 10 years, according to the Beijing Youth Legal Aid and Research Center.

As the only aid organiza-

tion for Beijing minors, the center received 500 calls for help this year, double that of last year.

Zhang Wenjuan, vice director of the center, suggested parents pay close attention to their children's physical and mental condition, and learn about what they do in school.

In many countries, sex education has become compulsory. British children start learning how to protect themselves from sexual assaults at the age of 5. American children get six stages of sex-ed.

Switzerland has a model sex education course. Since 1942, the country has begun giving sex-ed to children older than 7 years old. The content rages from giving birth to the physiological structure of one's body.

The cases in China have exposed problems in the current qualification of primary school teachers.

"Now that many schools aren't even qualified to stay open, how could you expect the teachers to be qualified?" Xiong said.

Xiong said most molestation cases happened in rural areas and cities where poor educational support make

good teachers hard to find.

But the problem is also that the Law on the Protection of Minors, the Law for Compulsory Education and the Law of Teacher don't apply there.

The cases also aroused debate on whether having sex with a minor should be con-

sidered rape. Currently, the law says girls as young as 14 to may consent to sex.

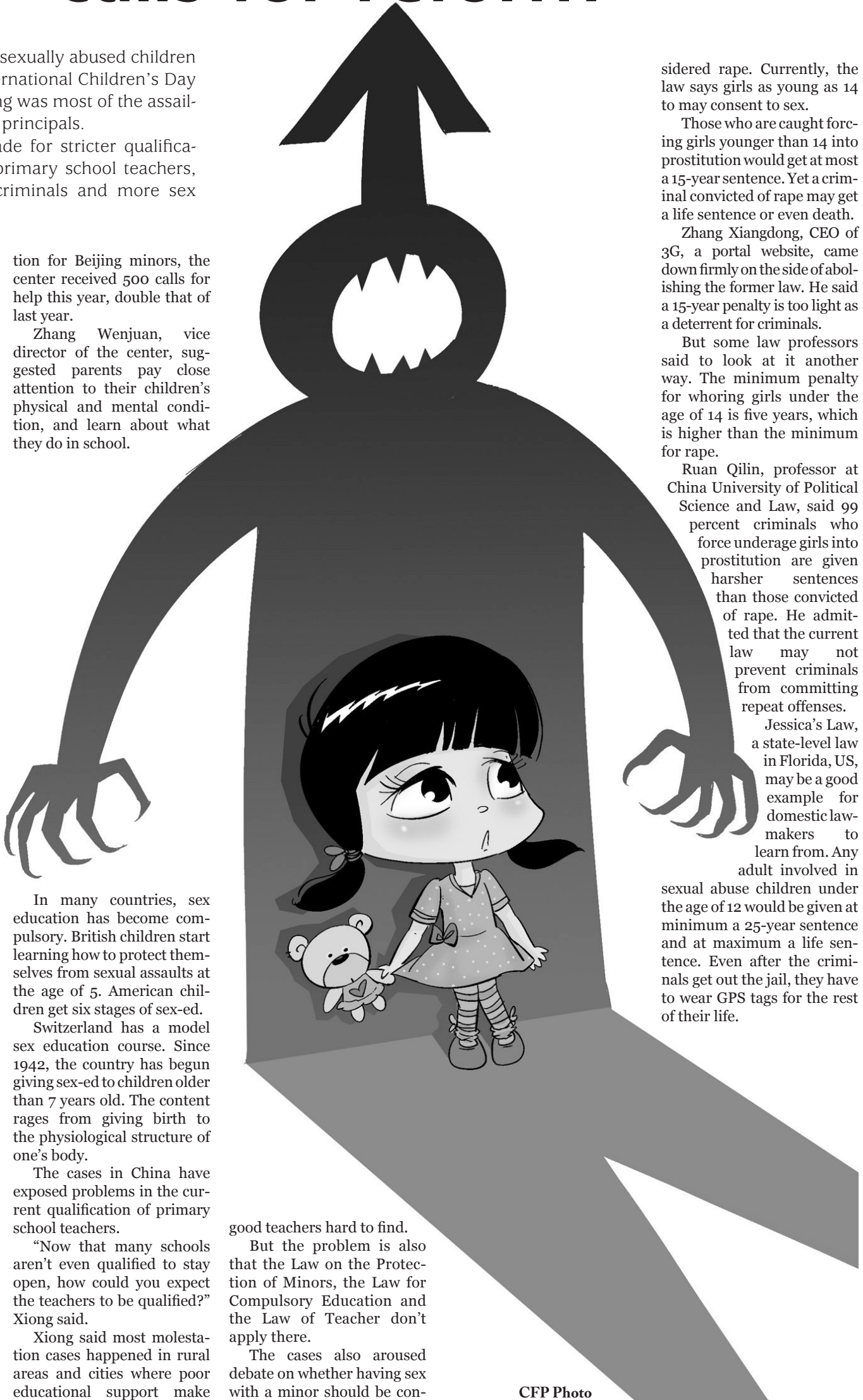
Those who are caught forcing girls younger than 14 into prostitution would get at most a 15-year sentence. Yet a criminal convicted of rape may get a life sentence or even death.

Zhang Xiangdong, CEO of 3G, a portal website, came down firmly on the side of abolishing the former law. He said a 15-year penalty is too light as a deterrent for criminals.

But some law professors said to look at it another way. The minimum penalty for whoring girls under the age of 14 is five years, which is higher than the minimum for rape.

Ruan Qilin, professor at China University of Political Science and Law, said 99 percent criminals who force underage girls into prostitution are given harsher sentences than those convicted of rape. He admitted that the current law may not prevent criminals from committing repeat offenses.

Jessica's Law, a state-level law in Florida, US, may be a good example for domestic lawmakers to learn from. Any adult involved in sexual abuse children under the age of 12 would be given at minimum a 25-year sentence and at maximum a life sentence. Even after the criminals get out the jail, they have to wear GPS tags for the rest of their life.



CFP Photo



Zhao Wei, director of So Young

Young moviegoers for past

By Zhao Hongyi

Two Chinese movies are provoking new ideas and excitement for social liberalization; and the other for its three struggling young people. China is entering a new era driven by the dynamic young generation. But many in the last generation are unwilling to step back.



Advertisement for So Young

Two moving movies

Two movies have recently captured the imaginations of young viewers: *So Young*, directed by movie star Zhao Wei, and *American Dreams in China*, by Hong Kong director Peter Chan.

So Young gives viewers a look at the simpler times of the 1980s and early 1990s, when people were working hard for a better future.

The movie, which follows a case of simple campus love, raked in 600 million yuan during its first week at the box office.

American Dreams in China follows a group of young university graduates who establish an English training class and build it into a training group that covers almost every high school and university subject.

The main characters are a Chinese graduate, a US postgraduate who completed his undergraduate degree in China and a Chinese businessman seeking opportunities in the US.

The group grows throughout the 1990s, opening thousands of classes throughout China and becoming listed on the NASDAQ. The three teachers are rich by their 40s.

American Dreams in China earned 170 million yuan on its opening weekend.

It's difficult to explain the films' popularity, but they seem to resonate with viewers at a time when job opportunities are scarce and starting one's own business appears to be the only way forward.

The exciting characters who overcome difficult situations seem a harsh contrast to modern China, where rigid social structure quash dreams before they can take flight.

When did China lose its dynamism?

Dynamic history

Young people tend to focus on three periods of Chinese history: the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, the first decade of the People's Republic of China and the economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s.

During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han (156-87 BC), China became an economic and military power. The country had the wealth to support its increasing population, and attracted the attention of Xiongnu raiders in the north.

The frequent clashes eventually drove them into the

ers nostalgic st hope

ent China today: one is the nostalgic portrayal of the golden days of
ng men who strive to build their own business.
people's ideas and strength.
and watch where these ideas will lead.



Peter Chan, director of *American Dreams in China*

5
Center stage



Advertisement for *American Dreams in China*

desert, and west into the Middle East and Europe.

In the 1950s, Mao Zedong led China to rise up after a century of military domination and drove out the weak republican government. The revolution brought about a major change in consciousness as people began to work for themselves.

In spite of widespread poverty, people were hopeful about the future. That hope turned into excitement when Deng Xiaoping opened the door to personal fortunes in the 1980s.

"We Chinese require only a little freedom, fairness and transparency to create tremendous prosperity," says Wang Jun, a professor of social science at Peking University.

But the current business climate seems to have

smashed that optimism and sent it back into the pages of history.

Collision of ideas

China's current depression is the result of political, social, economical and cultural clashes.

Shi Yong, editor of *Nanfeng Window* magazine, says "the door of history has never closed to us and we believe what we are facing now will never close to the future generation," meaning we can always learn from history.

"We are witnessing a collision of ideas from different generations, and each wants to push the country in a different direction," Shi Yong wrote in the foreword of the article.

Peter Chan admits that the movie only loosely fol-

lows the trials of the people on which it was based, but that it accurately reflects the dynamism of young people in the 1980s.

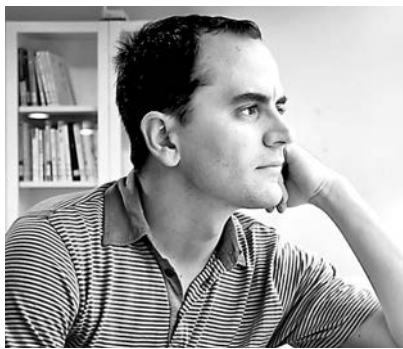
"That attitude was the driving force behind their success," Chan says.

For Tian Tian, a scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Science, the collision of generational ideals is not necessarily a bad thing. "The energy from this friction will eventually push us in a new direction," she says.

But Wang Jun, a professor of social science and philosophy at Peking University, is more realistic.

"When ideas and energy clash, the result is less important than the process," he says.

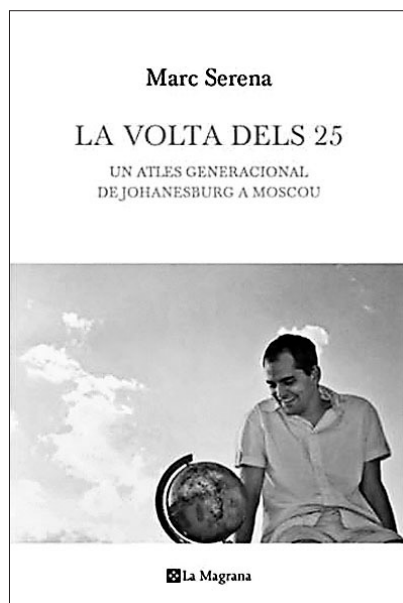
"History is a long process. We need to be careful with each step we take," he says. "It's the same with reforms."



By Chen Nan

What is real life? Young Spanish journalist Marc Serena took a gap year to find out, leaving behind his old life and living among strangers who knew nothing about the person he's supposed to be.

Rather than do touristy activities and feast on exotic cuisines, Serena searches for universal truths. By telling stories of characters on the margins, he offers an uncompromising vision of rising above one's self-imposed limitations and truly living – and most importantly, observing how the youth of today might shape tomorrow.



25-year-old traveler makes most of gap year



25 friends Serena made during his trip

Photos provided by Marc Serena

An award-winning travel blog

Serena, 25, interviewed 25 people who were also 25 years old from 25 different countries. These interviews were then compiled into his book, *La Volta Dels 25*, which has been translated and released in China.

A Catalan reporter, Serena began his career as an investigative journalist. His passion for traveling, however, never diminished, and that comes across in his writings.

In 2008, with money saved up from work, he planned to purchase a car as a 25th-year birthday present for himself.

But the financial crash that hit Europe that year changed his plans. "Something we thought was unshakably solid suddenly collapsed, and I couldn't help but ask: what will our world be like in the future?" he said. "People who are my age will shape the world; knowing their ideals might offer me some insight."

His wanderlust was reignited. He stocked up on travel brochures and hit the road.

"After buying an around-the-world-ticket, I felt there was no way for me to go back," he said.

His grand tour had a unique but clear objective: rather than write a book for a new generation of independent, budget-conscious travelers, he decided to interview the people in the places he traveled. He wanted to seek out commonalities between young people around the world.

He documented his travel on the blog www.lavoltadelos25.com, which in 2009 earned a Travel World Award for being a top non-English-language blog.

He wrote: "Getting to know young people is the best way to imagine our future. With this particular field work, traveling to all these places I have tried

to represent a global people generation, without any suppositions."

The blog also was recognized by Lonely Planet, which gives voice to the most prominent tourism and travel bloggers in the world. The publisher awarded Serena's blog the title "best personal blog in the Blocs Catalunya 2009."

Transcontinental sojourn

"Each country has a totally different situation," he said. "What I learned from each country can hardly be applied to the next one, so I must start from the beginning every time I cross a border."

Like many solo travelers, his exploits take him across obscure lands. As he writes in the book's preface, he embarked on his adventure without a clear route in mind. When he arrived in a country, he didn't know what his next destination would be.

"Frequently during any bus or train journey, I endeavored to engage with my fellow passengers, and sometimes I got advice, personal impressions, answers," he said. He held no assumptions about the places he went.

The translator of the book, Wu Xianmin, said: "I prefer travel literature that debunks stereotypes and even pokes fun at the traveler. There is a wonderful range of styles of travel writing nowadays to suit all kinds of taste. Like any aspiring writer, the novice travel writer should immerse him or herself in the whole range of styles and then aim to write in the style that they most enjoy reading; that's what Serena's book has done."

Engaging characters

His narration has a tint of documentary writing. During his travel, he meets engaging young people from all over: a poet from Zimbabwe, a Maori artist in New Zealand, a Paralympics athlete in Hong Kong, an environmentalist from China, a campaigner against

globalization from Canada, a prisoner in Santiago de Chile, a famous singer from South Korea.

Each chapter begins with the name of the person, occupation, country and how they became acquainted. But finding the first 25 people was a daunting task.

Some he sought out, but others he met purely through coincidence.

"It happened when I had to travel a long way to interview someone important," he said. "In other occasions, I met interesting people at cultural events, or at concerts, poetry recitals, conferences."

"I was lucky to meet all those characters on the trip. They are the protagonists of my book. I just hope to provide a new perspective and leave the reader to judge for themselves."

When he arrived in China in 2008, Serena discovered that environmental problems were often in the news. He dialed up members of non-government organizations and followed up with those who cared about environmental protection.

He eventually got in touch with Li Ang of Greenpeace, who he interviewed for the book.

When he got to Japan, he was tremendously shocked by consumerism and people's considerable purchasing power. "The lingering reproaches of consumerism, the mysteries of technology, the antipathies of race, shifts of balance, bewilderments of progress, corrosions of money and power – all, it seemed to me, were reaching some kind of climax," he said.

"In such a society, I was also looking for a mental state of freedom, not limited by routines, and I was more curious about the people who could maintain their inner peace."

So he entered a temple, and made friends with a monk. Another character for the book, which are filled with characters.

Inspiration from Swedish furniture

By Annie Wei

Swedish furniture is known for being simple, functional and modern.

However, if you feel bored with IKEA-style furniture, *Beijing Today* is here to introduce you to A2, a small yet unique Swedish furniture brand.

In 2008, designers from the studio A2 founded this brand. At first, they worked with different commissioned projects, but then they decided to launch their own.

It took them one year to prepare. They started to present their collection at the Stockholm Furniture Fair.

The brand said its vision is to be new, young and brave, daring to create interesting and different objects with strong identities.

We like its design because

they are simple and practical, ideal for small apartments, but also look fresh and hip.

The items we like include a small plain cabinet with fish-scale leather patterns on the doors, exemplarily crafted.

If you want a smaller Swedish design, try A2's Smaland tray. Smaland is where the brand rooted. The tray uses patterns of logs, presenting Smaland's forest.

The hexagonal side table is practical. It can be easily placed at restaurants, offices or anywhere at home.

The twig coat hanger not only has a clean design, but also can be used anywhere, including public areas, hallways, bedrooms or bathrooms for clothes, bags and towels.

The sneak peak table is a small table used as a side-

board, a dressing table or a small writing desk, with a small drawer.

Its collection of stackable units named "Street" is fun for storing magazines, books and plants. It consists of four parts, a frame, a house, a high and a low unit. Users can combine them in different ways according to the space.

Anyone interested can check them out at the high-end buyer boutique Lance Crawford.

Local furniture brands from young designers are also worth checking out, including Fnji.net and Li Naihai at Caochangdi.

A2

Where: Lane Crawford, Seasons Place, 2 Jinchengfang Jie, Xicheng District

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 6622 0808



Twig coat hanger



Stackable units



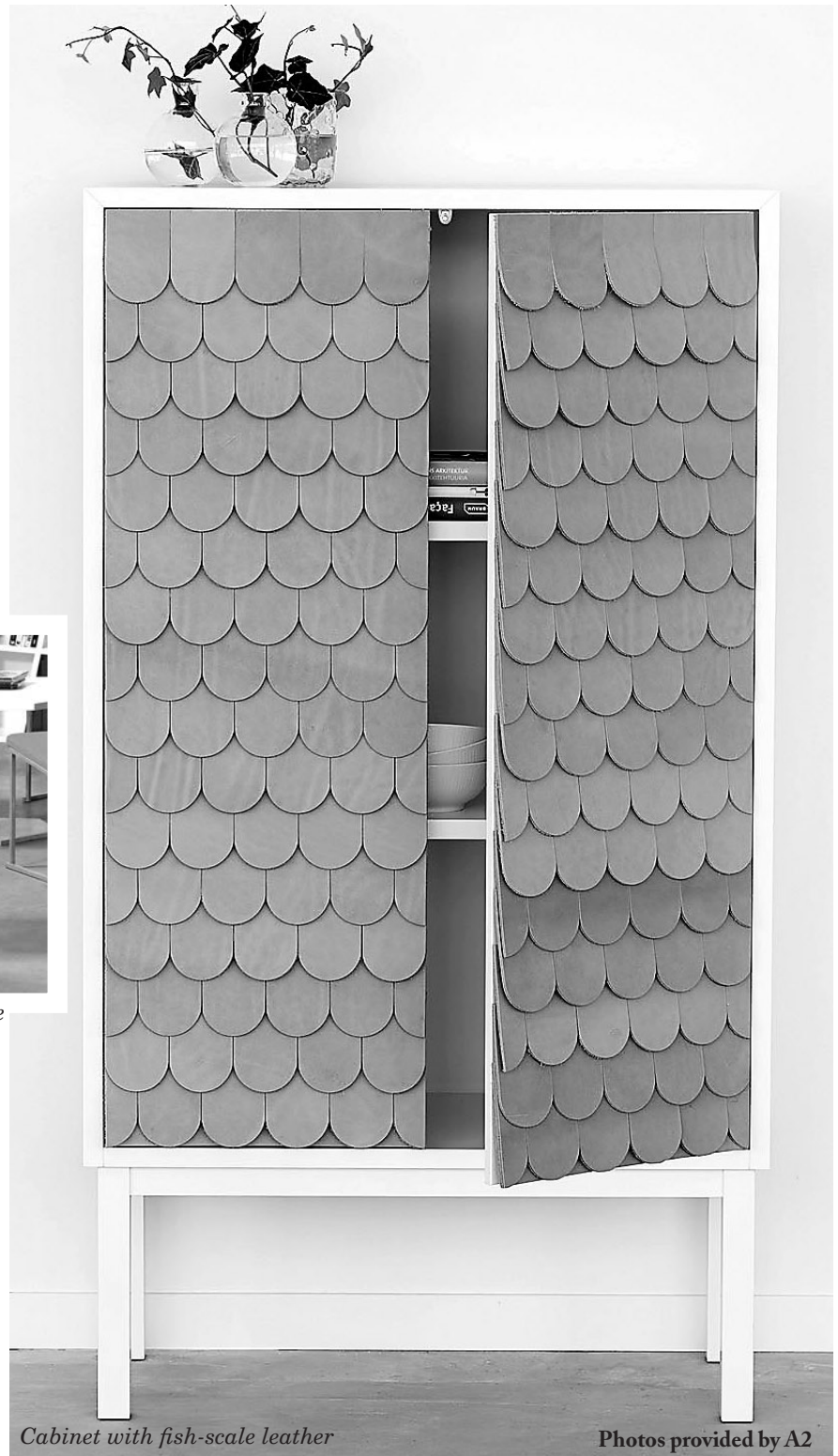
Sneak peak table



Hexagonal side table



Smaland tray



Cabinet with fish-scale leather

Photos provided by A2

Chefs' specialty and a fun evening party

By Annie Wei

This week we visited two high-end restaurants and checked out their specialties: tea-flavor dishes and teppanyaki delivered with flair. Also, we announce an upcoming party at the city's highest bar and lounge.



Chilled abalone with leaf mustard and XO sauce



Grilled chicken with sesame and lemon sauce

Tea dishes at Ritz-Carlton

Tea has always been a symbol of Chinese culture. To impress your guests, nothing is better than quality tea dishes at a good restaurant.

The executive chef Ku Chi Fai from Ritz-Carlton's Cantonese restaurant Yu just created a new menu for spring and summer. In the menu, Ku puts a new twist on classic Cantonese cuisine. Some dishes are specially infused with tea leaves to have a richer flavor, such as homemade tofu with Longjing tea and smoked duck breast with bamboo shoots.

Other recommended dishes include cooked dry oyster and pan-fried grouper with truffle sauce; wok-fried Chinese sausage and celery served with lettuce leaf, and braised prawns and Malay sauce.

Yu Restaurant

Where: The Ritz-Carlton Beijing, 83A, Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District
Open: 11 am – 2:30 pm, 5-9 pm
Tel: 5908 8951



Pan-fried Australian scallop with pepper Photos by The Ritz-Carlton Beijing

Teppanyaki chef's stunning performance

People like teppanyaki because they can watch the chef prepare the food. However, not everyone can do it like Guo Wenjia.

Guo used to be the executive chef of Maya, a chain teppanyaki restaurant—that's all over the city. He helped open eight outlets.

He begins by presenting tips for diners and demonstrating how to use a fork and knife, with the sort of flair expected from bartenders.

"You need to know your ingredients," Guo said.

While preparing each dish, Guo explains how to prepare the gravy and make similar dishes at home using simple utilities.

"Temperature is important," Guo said. For fish, you should adjust your pan to 220 C, and 280 C for meat.

The first dish we tried was cod with



Fried prawns

pineapple. He used cod bones, herbs and mushrooms to make the gravy. Pineapple is ideal for pairing with fried fish, as it takes away the grease.

"When you prepare cod, just pad it with some flour," he said. The flour helps the frozen cod look golden and keeps it from overheating.

The second dish was buttered tiger

prawns. "Don't use oil when you start cooking prawns," Guo said. The oil will take away the prawn's juice and make it taste dry.

When you need to add oil to intensify its flavors, Guo said, pour it on the prawn's head.

Guo can be seen at Chinese restaurant Xiang'eqing, one of the few res-



Fried cod with tomato and pineapple Photos by An Jianda

taurant chains on the stock market. The restaurant is known for authentic Hunan, Hubei and Cantonese cuisines and luxury Chinese decoration.

Xiang'eqing

Where: 3 Jiaoyu Jie, Xicheng District

Open: 11 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6656 6468

Party high in the air

With the highest bar in town at 330 meters, Atmosphere is scheduled to host its third airline-themed annual party on June 29.

Located on the 80th floor of China World Summit Wing, club-goers and cocktail drinkers will literally be up in the air.

The evening will kick off at 9 with free shooters offered at the reception. Guests can expect plenty of airline-inspired decorations and tricks that completely changes the interior of this upscale lounge bar.

Tailor-made airplane seats will also

be placed at the entrance of Atmosphere, giving patrons the chance to take photos with aircrew models. Strobe lights and public announcements will be sounded to elevate the patrons' experience of being onboard a party flight.

Guests are encouraged and will be rewarded for dressing according to the event's theme as pilots or stewardesses. Aviator sunglasses and pilot caps will be given out to accomplish an atmosphere of a fest onboard a private jet.

The evening's entertainment will

consist of a live band performance by Beijing's own soul tunes band, Jackson Twins, at 10 pm, and will continue for four sets throughout the evening, followed by a choreographed dance performance.

Tickets are priced at 200 yuan per person and may be pre-ordered or purchased at the door.

Air Atmosphere

Where: 80 China World Summit Wing, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: June 29, 9 pm – late

Tel: 8571 6460



Last year's Air Atmosphere party

Photos provided by China World Summit Wing